

## [Half Moon Valley Massacre]

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Folkstuff - Rangelore [?] Words

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by

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Pioneer Experiences From Uvalde Leader-News UVALDE COUNTY, DISTRICT #10

HALF MOON VALLEY MASSACRE

As told by John Coalson

to

Mrs. Letitia Charlton

I was born in 1843. My parents had seven children, five boys and two girls.

With the tide of immigration my parents drifted westward. encountering many hardships and dangers.

## Library of Congress

Once when we lived on Coyeras Creek, a tributary to the Llano River, my father, Nick Coalson, owned a fine horse. At night he kept this animal locked in a stable made of heavy timber.

Returning one night after dark a bear hunt with two captured cubs, he took the horse to lock him up. Inside the stable were several Indians who fired at dad when he opened the door. One bullet struck him in the hip and he suffered from the wound as long as he lived.

At the time he maintained a pack of hounds. Most of them w were vicious. He called them and they drove the Indians away.

Once dad and Mr. Mann went deer hunting. They left at night or evening. The next morning mother, ever watchful over her brood of youngsters, cautioned us to be quiet as the house was surrounded by Indians. Such firearms as we had were a miscellaneous bunch of junk. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas

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"There was a man by the name of Morris working for dad. He was killed within thirty feet of our door. Mother, seemingly unafraid, put on a hat and a jacket of dad's. The front door to the room where we were was split in two sections. The upper section could be opened while the lower section remained closed.

"I had never seen mother look so beautiful. If they should kill our mother! "Keep quiet, children," she whispered. The color never left her cheeks. She walked calmly to the door with her abundant hair tucked under dad's hat. She then flung the upper portion of the door open and looked out. The Indians retreated and after several depredations left. She learned afterwards from a man who was watching, that the Indians had a lookout who signaled to them that dad and [??] were returning. So they left.

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Mother died at [?] about 1872 or 1873. Dad afterwards b brought his family to the Edwards County section. He then married a Mrs. [?] Humphrey who had a small child by her former marriage.

After this we moved to a place called Half Moon Prairie, about 14 miles north of [?] near the break of the plains. No more beautiful place can be imagined. A level of grassy valley, always green and formed into a [??] by hills thickly studded with cedar. [??] was situated at the western end of the valley.

My parents had twins, Etta and Arthur. They were [?] ten at this time.

[??] some [?] and dad [?] his place [?] Coopers Creek for sheep. Arthur and I herded them. [?] camp was about six miles from 3 home. Selecting a place, Dad made tanks to catch rain water for the sheep and goats. One morning Arthur and I discovered a bumble-bee nest rich in honey. We worked the greater part of the day trying to kill the bees.

Suddenly, we found ourselves surrounded by mounted Indians. Side by side, we started running but I was shot between the shoulders and fell right there. Arthur ran on and was killed some distance from me but I did not know it then.

The bullet came out of my chest at the left front and close to my collar bone. The Indians came back and watched me closely at times. On one trip, I must have flinched and they saw that I was still alive. I had my arm across my eyes and one of them shot me through the upper arm. This wound was more painful than the one in my chest.

I got up weakly and walked to camp about four-hundred yards away. I let the water out of the barrels and crawled into the puddle. I laid there all night. Next morning, I ate a little barbecued beef and again laid down in the water. Sometime later, I felt a hand on my arm. I felt indifferent but opened my eyes. I was gratified to find the Texas Rangers. They took me and Arthur's body home.

## Library of Congress

Dad had been hard put for he had been fighting Indians all evening and had killed one of the party who had killed Arthur and shot me. Just one year to a day after this, about 1878, there occurred the massacre of three more members of my family.

It was June. My step-mother wanted to gather some wild grapes growing along Cedar Creek at the east end of the valley. There were no horses handy so mother and Etta, taking the baby with them, each rode a donkey. Dad went with them.

Later on, he left them to drive home the milk cows. Dad took the 4 cows through the trail. My step-mother and Etta came back by the road. It was late when Dad arrived home and I felt uneasy about the women. Dad said they were coming by way of the road but I was not satisfied, so I went and found them all three dead. Their bodies lay near where the valley narrowed at the eastern end and where the cedars grow thickly.

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Note: As I had know about this massacre all my life, I have ridden through this valley in later years and could never forbear an eerie feeling of discomfort as I fancied I saw the shifty eyes and feathered heads of Indians in the cedar on either side. (Letitia Charlton.)